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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 055212

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SUBJECT: MGLBO1: LEBANON MONITORING GROUP SITUATION

REPORT NO. 24

PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY FOR MAY 25 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

¶1. (SBU) Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Qatari PM Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, Arab League Secretary General Moussa, EU High Representative Solana, and the foreign ministers of France, Spain, and Italy plan to attend the election and LAF General Sleiman's inauguration, according to press. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail, NOWLebanon.com)

HIZBALLAH POSTPONES SPEECH AND RALLY UNTIL MAY 26

¶2. (SBU) Hizballah leader Nasrallah is scheduled to speak at the event, which will commemorate the eighth anniversary of Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

SLEIMAN THANKS SUPPORTERS, BUT BLASTS ISRAEL

¶3. (SBU) Sleiman conveyed his gratitude for efforts by Qatar, the Arab League, and all countries supporting

Lebanon, pledging to preserve Lebanese democracy, uphold the constitution, and protect freedoms of thought and expression. He also accused Israel of attempting to distance the Lebanese from each other, declaring "our enemy is Israel." The Lebanon desk notes anti-Israeli rhetoric is a common feature of Lebanese politics. (Ops/Lebanon desk telcon, NOWLebanon.com)

OPPOSITION REMOVES TENTS FROM DOWNTOWN BEIRUT

14. (SBU) Embassy Beirut reports Hizballah continued to remove tents around the Grand Serail throughout the night. The only remaining tents in the area were put up three years ago to protest the detention of Lebanese citizens by Syria, and are not controlled by the opposition. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

U.S. STATEMENTS RECEIVE WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE

15. (SBU) The Lebanese press focused on Assistant Secretary Welch's comments that the Doha agreement was a positive development for Lebanon and the next step would be implementation. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

UNSC WELCOMES DOHA AGREEMENT

16. (U) Media report the body issued a non-binding

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statement supporting the agreement, calling it "an essential step towards the resolution of the current crisis." (Reuters)

17. (U) Minimize considered.
RICE